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AUTHOR Sanford, Julie P.; Emmer, Edmund T.
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ABSTRACT

A development and field-testing effort explored ways of helping preservice teachers learn classroom management knowledge and skills during field-based preservice courses. An observation guide, "Learning the Classroom Environment, An Observer's Guide to Classroom Management" (Sanford & Emmer, 1985), has four general areas: the classroom setting; classroom procedures and routines; managing student behavior; and organization of instructional activities. The guide was used during one semester at four different institutions in different kinds of preservice training experiences. Samples of students' work and feedback from course instructors and students were analyzed to assess the usefulness of the approach, explore different ways the guide can be used in conjunction with other course activities, and plan future development or revision steps. The study results indicated that activities described in the guide were effective in helping students learn about classroom management. Descriptions are given of the use of the guide at each school. (CB)

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Learning About Classroom Management Through Guided Observation and Analysis

Julie P. Sanford

Edmund T. Emmer

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Research and Development Center for Teacher Education
The University of Texas at Austin

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Introduction

This paper describes a development and field-testing effort that explored ways of helping preservice teachers learn classroom management knowledge and skills during field-based, preservice courses. The project grew from classroom research that has identified many components of succesful classroom management and organization and from our experience in working with hundreds of beginning teachers to help them plan for or improve management in their classrooms. It was also a response to our own observation (and that of many other teacher educators and researchers) that despite the fact that classroom management problems appear to dominate the attention of preservice students in field experiences, most first-year teachers have acquired few concepts to help them understand or analyze the management demands of the classroom environment. They have no clear basis or framework for their decision making. To address this problem, we developed an observation guide that can be used to focus preservice students' field observations, classroom discussions and analysis tasks. This guide was used at four different institutions in different kinds of preservice training experiences in the fall of 1985. Samples of students' work, and feedback from course instructors and from students were analyzed to assess usefulness of the approach, explore different ways the guide can be used in conjunction with other course activities, and plan future development or revision steps.

Background: Field Experiences

In their section on "The Curriculum of Field Experience," Lanier and Little (1986) argue that much of the field work in teacher education fosters a practical, managerial focus that detracts from a reflective,

analytical perspective. Field experiences, unaccompanied by suitable guidance, promote uncritical acceptance of existing practice and do not foster attention to other important teaching functions, such as children's "higher-order learning needs."

There is little question that concerns about achieving classroom control are a dominant theme of field experiences. Fuller (1969) established that the initial concerns of student teachers were about "survival," and several researchers have noted a tendency for student teachers to become more custodial in their orientation over the semester (Hoy, 1967; Willower, 1968; Hoy & Rees, 1977). Lacey (1977) also found, in a longitudinal study, that concerns and crises related to classroom management were a common feature in the student teaching landscape. Griffin and his colleagues (1983) further documented an emphasis on managerial topics and themes in conferences between cooperating teachers and student teachers.

It is our view that the dominance of managerial issues in preservices field experiences is neither surprising nor necessarily inappropriate, given the centrality and complexity of the classroom management function. There are two serious problems, however. The first is that management may be emphasized to the exclusion of other important issues and content. Managerial content and instructional/curricular content should be viewed as complementary and closely interrelated, rather than competing functions. The second problem is that the way in which classroom management content is most often approached during field experiences seems to be generally ineffectual in promoting development of analysis, understanding, and competence. For example, the Griffin et al. (1983) student teaching

study found very little emphasis on general principles and concepts in student teacher/cooperating teacher interaction; instead, classroom management was typically dealt with on a here-and-now, situation-specific basis. Rarely were student teachers provided with any strong basis for generalizing beyond their specific clinical setting.

In an effort to help students relate theory and practice, many teacher education programs strive to coordinate college course experiences with field practicum experiences. Smith (1980) called for the careful articulation of observational and other field experiences with course work, so that preservice teacher education students can acquire definitional knowledge and principles in a context that contributes to their factual, clinical knowledge. Early field experiences are now features of many teacher education programs, but coordinating the timing of observation experiences and course work does not necessarily help preservice teachers to effectively use their classroom experiences as opportunities for analysis and application of theory (see Erdman, 1983). Clinical experiences must be carefully structured to teach classroom relevant concepts and provide students practice in "diagnosing classrooms" (Copeland, 1981). Copeland (in press) describes four strategies for encouraging growth of analytic/reflective capabilities in clinical teacher education programs. One is assignments requiring students to "examine, review or reflect on what they observe or experience in classrooms." Copeland also notes that students can be required to write interpretive descriptions of what they observe and to share those descriptions with others, in order to develop and test generalizations about teaching and learning.

Erdman (1983) in her discussion of the purposes of early field experiences suggests that goals of such experiences should be to help preservice teachers "learn to recognize, articulate, and refine what they know" (p. 27) and that structured assignments and discussions directed toward reflection on experiences are necessary. Erdman identifies two perspectives on preservice field experiences: apprenticeship and partnership. She notes that "apprenticeship" kinds of activities should (though often do not) provide opportunities for examining classroom routines, considering alternatives, and relating observed teaching practices or classroom events to future teaching activities. "Mechanical aspects of teaching should be linked with the concerns and decisions to which they are related, both at the classroom level and in terms of the normative questions about the role of the school as a social institution" (p. 28).

Another approach to more effective use of clinical activities is suggested by an experiment conducted by Warner (1985). A group of student teachers received extensive cognitive discrimination training in classroom management concepts. This training included studying definitions of key concepts and readings of related research findings. Then, criteria for evaluating performance levels of the concepts were discussed and used to analyze and contrast video tapes of experienced, beginning and other student teachers. Student teachers in the study also engaged in other tasks designed to help them incorporate the key management concepts into their own teaching schemas. At the end of the training period, five, open-ended questions about teaching, planning, and decision making were answered by each participant. Student teachers in Warner's program were more like experienced teachers in their

thinking about planning, use of theory, and decision making, compared to a group of student teachers not exposed to the cognitive training activities.

In summary, field experiences, while generally viewed as valuable, push students toward an emphasis on managerial issues. The "content" of field experiences do not often include enough structure to give coherence to the students' perception of classroom management. Thus, the students concentrate much (some would say most) of their effort at solving the immediate management puzzle. Important aspects of teaching--such as diagnosis and effective instruction--are short changed. More effective and efficient use of field experiences are needed, to promote a stronger conceptual base and to give coherence to the preservice teacher education students' thinking about classrooms and management. The observation guide, Learning the Classroom Environment, An Observer's Guide to Classroom Management (Sanford & Emmer, 1985), was developed and field tested to address this problem.

The Observation Guide

Goals and Content

The observation guide was developed for use in a variety of field-based courses that include classroom management content. The Guide's purpose is to help observers benefit from their observation experiences by completing activities that promote important skills and understanding in the area of classroom management. These skills include:

--Perceiving multiple aspects of the classroom environment, rather than focusing on only single dimensions or highly visible behavior

--Accumulating an adequate description of the total class setting before making judgements or evaluations

--Being reflective about effects of different practices before adopting them, rather than merely imitating observed behaviors

--Adopting and articulating explicit goals and criteria for classroom management success

--Increased ability to plan and carry out a system for classroom management, through development of a framework for decision making.

The activities described and recommended in the Guide include structured observations and notetaking, written description and analysis guided by specific questions, structured interviews with the teacher, and classroom discussions in which students compare and discuss their observation experiences.

The Guide is divided into four related aspects of management: The Classroom Setting for Instruction; Classroom Procedures and Routines; Managing Student Behavior; and Organizing Instructional Activities. These areas are closely related; however, it is difficult for a preservice student to notice and capture all of the details relevant to management at once. Having a separate guide for each area allows concentration on a particular aspect or two in each observation. For each of the areas the Guide provides a brief (one to two pages, double spaced) overview of classroom goals and a discussion of how different teachers meet these goals. Some of the critical concepts in each area are identified in this section.

Area I, The Classroom Setting, focuses on how the teacher arranges the physical resources of the classroom, including such aspects as wall or board displays, traffic patterns, and arrangement of equipment,

furniture, and materials to minimize distractions and facilitate the teacher's job of instructing and monitoring students.

Area II, Classroom Procedures and Routines, focuses preservice students' attention on the decisions the teacher has made in selecting and teaching students a set of procedures, routines, and rules that minimize time and effort devoted to noninstructional matters and that support a task-oriented, efficient, and pleasant classroom climate. The Noteguide and questions for this area require preservice students to examine beginning classroom routines, procedures for administrative business, policies for student talk and movement around the room during different kinds of activities, procedures for communicating assignments, distributing supplies and handing in work, how students get help or attention, and routines for ending class.

Area III, Managing Student Behavior, focuses observer's attention on how teachers keep students engaged in activities and how they prevent or deal with uncooperative or disruptive student behavior. A major focus in this area is how teachers monitor students, that is, how they actively gather information about what students are doing and whether they understand directions and instructions. Consequence systems, teacher behaviors during transitions, and pacing of activities are also targeted. In this observation the observers monitor student beahaviors, keeping a running account of events (a classroom narrative) that includes periodic on- and off-task counts.

The final area of the Guide focuses attention on organization of instructional activities: pacing of presentations and activities, communication of directions and content, how the teacher monitors student understanding and completion of work, kinds of tasks and format

of instructional activities. Preservice students attempt to keep a running account of activities focusing on how the teacher organizes and presents instruction and monitors student work. Periodic counts are made of students off task or in dead time. Notes and questions direct students to describe the organization of activities (format, transitions, and time use); management of student work (type of assignment, difficulty level, accountability, and credit); and characteristics of instruction (giving directions, questioning, teacher presentation of content, communication of objectives).

In developing the Guide, these four areas were selected as a framework on the basis of results of large-scale studies of management effectiveness in elementary and junior high schools (Emmer, Sanford, Clements, & Martin, 1982; Evertson, Emmer, Sanford, & Clements, 1983). The findings of these studies clustered logically into four areas, and this configuration has proven to be practical in intervention studies and many staff development efforts (see Sanford, Emmer, & Clements, 1983).

How the Guide is Used

Although the Observation Guide was designed to be used in a variety of settings and field experiences and it was therefore assumed that adaptation would be necessary and desirable, some recommendations and assumptions were made about its use. A "Forward to the Instructor" recommends that the Guide should be correlated with other course content on the topic of classroom management, including lecture and discussion activities providing detailed definitions of concepts and examples of the kinds of description and analysis students should attempt. In addition, follow-up discussions in which students compare their findings

are recommended, in order to expose students to a variety of classroom examples and encourage them to explore effects of different strategies. Supplemental reading is recommended as preparation for observation as well as for acquiring a framework for interpretation and evaluation.

Recommended use of the Guide is described as requiring a minimum of four, 1-hour classroom observations plus time for at least one interview with the teacher. Following the sequence of guides in the book is recommended. It is also recommended that each observation last for an hour or for an entire secondary class period and that in elementary classrooms the set of observations should sample different times of the day in order to allow the observer to see the full complement of classroom procedures and instructional activities.

Recommended use of the Guide (as described in the field-tested version) includes the following student activities. First, the observer makes written notes during the observation, following the Noteguide for each area. Then, after the observation the observer uses the notes in preparing a written description or analysis guided by the questions accompanying each area. Approximately 10 questions are provided in each area. Written descriptions and descriptive notes are specified, rather than summary ratings or coding schemes, in order to encourage the teacher candidates to use concepts in an active, generative way. Written analysis also provides instructors with a means of assessing comprehension. In the field-tested version, questions for written response are for the most part descriptive, not evaluative. They do not encourage students to critique the teacher's practices or skills nor do they require students to explicitly state or choose criteria for

effectiveness or discuss their own personal goals or plans for future teaching.

Depending on the constraints of the field experience, interviews with teachers can be scheduled as separate, supplementary activities or can be integrated with the observations and the resulting information used in the observer's written analysis.

In summary, recommended use of the Observation Guide consists of the following activities for each of the four observation areas:

1. Classroom presentation and discussion of relevant concepts, along with related reading assignments;

2. A 1-hour class observation in which students take notes following the Noteguide for the area, followed by an interview with the teacher, if possible;

3. Students' written responses to descriptive/analytical questions about their observation, using their notes as a resource; and

4. Class discussion in which students have opportunity to compare and discuss their observation experiences and answers to the questions.

Field Test Sites and Procedures

During the fall of 1985 the Observation Guide was field tested with a total of 109 students at four sites: Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana; University of Texas at Austin; University of Maryland at College Park; and University of Arizona, Tucson. The course setting at each site is described below:

Goshen College, Indiana. This course was entitled, "General Methods and Materials." It ran concurrently with the first 5 weeks of student teaching. Sixteen undergraduate, secondary students were enrolled, and these were student teaching in eight different content

areas. The field experience began with the first week of public school and continued throughout the semester. Goshen College is a private, religious, liberal arts institution.

University of Texas at Austin. The 65 students using the Guide at this site were enrolled in an undergraduate course, "Classroom Organization, Mangement, and Discipline," taken prior to student teaching by students in secondary programs, various subject majors. Most of the students were juniors or seniors, but five or six had degrees and were seeking certification. Four of them had been teachers. The field placement for the course was 4 hours a week, generally two consecutive periods, 2 days a week. In addition, there were two lectures and one discussion per week, with discussion sections subdivided into five groups of students.

University of Maryland, College Park. At this site the Guide was used in a postbaccalaureate year-long Master's degree program. The class included eight students, five secondary and three elementary. None of the students had teaching experience in public elementary or secondary schools. In the course titled, "Study of Teaching," the guide was used in the semester preceding student teaching. This semester included two field-based projects, first one focusing on classroom time use and then one on classroom management. For the classroom management project the field experience consisted of from 2 to 4 observations in one class, and one teacher interview.

University of Arizona, Tucson. Twenty postbaccalaureate students in a 14-month Master's program used the Guide at this site during the semester prior to their student teaching experience. Students, many who were older than average, were seeking certification as secondary

teachers. The course focused largely on classroom management and motivation. The field assignment for each student was with the teacher with whom the student would be student teaching the following spring. During the first 3 weeks of the semester students observed 1 hour a week, increasing to 4 hours a week later in the semester and culminating with a 2-day teaching assignment at the end of the semester.

Observation Guide Use at Each Site

Although the Observation Guide suggested tasks and activity sequences, it is a fact that curriculum materials do not structure learning tasks, teachers do. At each of the four test sites the Guide was used in a different task context determined by the instructor. Important aspects of use included: resources students were provided, products they were required to turn in, accompanying class activities, and task goals emphasized by the instructor.

Goshen College. At the Goshen College site three sections of the Guide were used in the following order: Area II, Classroom Procedures and Rules; Area IV, Organizing Instructional Activities; and last, Area III, Managing Student Behavior. Textbooks for the course included Mastery Teaching: Increasing Instructional Effectiveness in Secondary Schools by Madeline Hunter (198), and Classroom Management for Secondary Teachers (Emmer, Evertson, Sanford, Clements, & Worsham, 1984). The Guide for Area II was used in observations during the first day or days of public school, at the beginning of the college semester. Reading chapter two in the Emmer et al. text was a prerequisite assignment, however. A correlated reading assignment also preceded use of each of the other two Guides, and a class discussion was held after each observation assignment. Assignments required students to turn in

their responses to the analysis/description questions in each of the three areas, and some students also turned in classroom observation notes. Products were checked on a credit/no-credit basis rather than graded. Class discussion focused on the analysis/description questions and on additional, instructor designed questions requiring reflection and personal choice about the goals and procedures students thought they would use as a teacher.

University of Texas. At the University of Texas site the classroom management observation guide was used in conjunction with two required texts: Building Classroom Discipline, Second Edition (Charles, 1985) and the Emmer et al. text, Classroom Management for Secondary Teachers (1984). All four sections of the Guide were used, in the sequence presented, to help focus the students' field observations during 4 weeks of the course. Students were instructed during lecture meeting to examine the Observation Guide for the week and to note, while working in their classrooms, relevant material. They were also told that the Guides would be used as the basis for class discussion. Four discussion meetings were set aside for topics related to the Observation Guide, one meeting per Guide topic. Discussion leaders used the Guide questions to focus the discussions. Three of the meetings took place in November after the students had been in their field placement for at least 6 weeks, and the last discussion was held after Thanksgiving. No attempt was made to evaluate student performance during discussions although attendance was required. Two written products related to the Guide were required of students and each counted 10% of the students' course grade. Each written product was an essay (three pages), one dealing with a description of the physical setting (Area I), and one with classroom

procedures and routines (Area II). Students were to provide an integrated description of the "physical or behavioral features of the classroom" including a discussion of major areas that the student would plan to use in the student's own classroom, as well as areas in which the student would want to make significant changes. They were to consider their own goals and how similar or different arrangements or set of procedures from those they observed would help accomplish their goals. They were not required to turn in either their classroom notes or narratives or written responses to the analysis/description questions. Resources students were directed to use included the discussion in the observation guide, the Emmer et al. text, chapters 1-3, their classroom observations, and interviews with the teacher. Class discussions of relevant content and of students' observations also preceded the due date of the assignment.

University of Maryland. Compared with the other three field test sites, the Maryland site was unique in that students used the guide with a minimum number of opportunities to observe a class. In this course most students were able to observe only three or two times in a class at their teaching level (elementary or secondary). (The guide was organized for use in as few as four observations, but suggestions were given for using it with fewer observations if necessary, because it was intended for use in early education field courses as well as student teaching.) Observation and guide use fell in the second half of the semester and were preceded by four to five class sessions of lecture, discussion, and readings of relevant content as well as training and practice (using videotapes) on clinical observation techniques such as classroom narratives. Text resources used with the classroom management

project included Looking in classrooms, second edition (Good & Brophy, 1978), Beginning teacher handbook (Borko & Wildman, 1985), and the Emmer et al. texts, Classroom management for elementary teachers or Classroom management for secondary teachers. Goals for activities using the Guide included building students' skill in structured observation and analysis, concept acquisition, and decision making about their own future teaching. All four sections of the Guide were used as recommended in the Guide. Students were required to turn in their observation notes as delineated on the Observation Guide for each area and their written responses to the analysis questions. However, at the Maryland site there were no structured class discussions of students' observation experiences after assignment completion.

University of Arizona. At the University of Arizona site the Observation Guide was used in conjunction with classroom lectures and readings of articles, but no textbook was used. A copy of each Guide was given to students at the beginning of their field assignment. Two products related to the Guide were required of students: a set of observation notes for each of the four areas and a midterm composition exercise. Students could turn in observation notes anytime during the fall semester, except that the observation for each area had to be preceded by the class lecture on the topic. Students were not required to turn in written responses to the analysis questions, but some of the questions were used, along with instructor-designed questions, in small group discussions. Goals for Observation Guide use in this class included student awareness of key features of classrooms, student reflection on the demands of the classroom environment, and stimulation of discussion leading to increased student skills in decision making.

Data Sources for Analysis of Field Test Results

Data from each of the four field sites were examined to ascertain how the Guide was used, its effectiveness or usefulness in different task settings and ways of improving it. In general, three data sources were available: copies of student products, instructors' comments and recommendations, and students' comments and recommendations. The amount and specific form of available data varied greatly across sites, because of differences in the ways that the Guide was used and the thoroughness of data collection and reporting from each site. At least one assignment product was obtained for every student in the Goshen sample, while no student products were available from the Maryland site. Some kind of product was available from 50% of the Arizona students and 60% of the Texas students. Instructors' comments, recommendations, and impressions about student performance responses to the Guide were available from all four sites, but written student comments and recommendations about the Guide were obtained from only the Arizona and Goshen sites.

Analysis of student products. Student products varied greatly across the sites, according to the task requirements and evaluation criteria announced in the different courses. Nevertheless, in our examination of student products we were most interested in evidence that students were developing the skills and knowledge that the Guide focused on. Thus, our examination of all student products focused on three main characteristics. First, we looked for students' use of vocabulary and concepts that are highlighted in the Guide. This use was considered an indication that the student was incorporating the terminology into his or her working vocabulary about classrooms. In addition, we noted the

degree of detail students used in describing classroom procedures, particularly whether students covered the areas that were listed on the Guide when their assignment encouraged them to do so. A second characteristic we noted in student work was the frame of reference the students seemed to use in their evaluations or judgements about classroom practices. We noted whether the criteria they seemed to use were tacit or explicit and whether criteria reflected the emphases in the Guide (i.e., student engagement in activities, student understanding of their work, and time use in the class). Finally, in examining student products we looked to see whether there was any evidence that the student was incorporating what he or she learned from the observation into a personal frame of reference. In other words, we made note of any indication that students were beginning to make management decisions about what they would do in their own classrooms.

Results

Goshen College Results

Student products. Student products at the Goshen site consisted of written student responses to the analysis/description questions for Areas II, III, and IV of the Guide. Complete or partial sets of responses were available for all of the 16 students. In addition, class notes were available for some students in some areas of the Guide. These products were read and summarized according to the characteristics described above. In addition, evidence of change or growth across time (from the first week of school to the middle or end of the semester of student teaching) was noted.

The first assignment, Analysis Guide II, Classroom Procedures and Routines, was assigned to students during the first week of public

school, at the beginning of the university semester. Students' use of concepts and level of detail and the elaboration in their responses varied widely both among students and between questions for the same students. One detailed description included two pages of observation notes, which were based on the Observation Guide categories; this student's responses to the questions then drew upon the observation notes and provided a detailed description of classroom procedures. Two other students also were noted as using most of the concepts and providing a fair amount of detail. Most students, however, simply covered the questions in a perfunctory "workbook fashion" with a one- or two-sentence response. Differentiation of procedures according to activity type was uncommon, although some students elaborated answers to one or two questions. Most students used fewer than half of the concepts highlighted in the Guide.

Evidence that students were identifying explicit goals or rationales for judging or choosing particular classroom procedures was noted in their evaluative statements and comments that indicated an awareness of how the teacher's behavior affected the observed students. Four of the student observers showed some perceptions of effects on students. For the most part, however, student answers to the Guide questions were restricted to descriptive comments without attempting to assess effects or to offer explanations or evaluations of behavior. Tacit acceptance of observed teaching practices was common. One student showed some confusion about criteria for effectiveness. This student deemed the observed consequence system "effective" but described persistent misbehavior and disruption in the class, noting that students were "inherent trouble makers." The same student judged that the

climate in the room was "very positive and supportive," while describing the teacher yelling and threatening the class.

Analysis Guide IV, Organizing Instructional Activities, was used next in the Goshen sequence of activities. About half of the student products included narrative records of their observation, as called for in the Observation Guide. Some of these narratives were faily detailed, several pages long. Other notes of observations were not in narrative form and were sketchy. Two students provided extensive description and interpretation for most questions. However, answers tended to be mainly descriptive reporting and students typically did not try to explain events, contrast them with earlier observations, or evaluate what the teacher did. Use of vocabulary from the Analysis Guide was not particularly evident in their responses to the questions.

The final assignment in the Goshen sequence was Analysis Guide III, Managing Student Behavior. A count of terms and concepts used in students' responses to questions in this area showed extensive use by three students and limited to moderate use by the remaining 13 students. Three students, however, taught the "observed" lesson while their cooperating teacher took notes, then these students responded to the analysis/descriptive questions. Two of these papers were purposely omitted from the data set. (The one that was examined contained very teacher-focused content, with poor attention to student engagement.) Despite this Guide area's emphasis on student behavior, observers did not seem to take more of a student focus with Guide III than with the others. Again, Goshen students seemed to focus little on evaluation or personal decision making. It is important to note, however, that none of the questions requested students to do so nor did their assignment by

their instructor. However, personal goals and planning decisions were a focus of class discussions accompanying Guide use at the Goshen site.

Other findings from the Goshen site. Feedback from the instructor at the Goshen site indicated that the Guide was well designed for his purposes and that it would be used in future student teaching courses at that College. A specific suggestion for improving the Guide was to add evaluative and interpretive questions that encouraged students to do personal reflection and decision making.

Written comments from one student who used the Guide in fall 1985 and six using the Guide in the following spring semester indicated that students in general found the Guides helpful in directing their attention to specific details and events that might have been overlooked otherwise. Two students thought the Analysis ugide questions were repetitive of the content in the Observation Noteguides and that the Observation Noteguides were more helpful of the two.

University of Texas Results

Data for the Texas sample was limited to concepts and material in Guides I and II. Students were not required to turn in observation notes or responses to Guide questions. The task for them was to compose a three-page (typed, double-spaced) essay for each of the two areas (The Classroom Setting, and Classroom Procedures and Routines). A random sample of the two sets of student products was examined for 60% of the 65 students in the course.

Analysis of student products. In student essays for Guide Area I the amount of detail supplied for subareas varied. All students supplied room diagrams. Students exhibited varying levels of interpretation and analysis; most analyses dealt with constraints faced

by the teacher in arranging the physical setting, and students were usually able to note adjustments they agreed or disagreed with, although such judgements were usually made from an implicit frame of reference. Students did not analyze their own assumptions nor comment on how a particular arrangement of the setting was or was not consistent with their goals. Tabulation of concepts used in the essays indicated that almost all of the students used the terms appearing on the Guide to a considerable degree. Furthermore, each essay contained some evaluative remarks. More than one half of the students explicitly accepted or rejected all or part of the teacher's arrangements, while the remaining students simply commented on whether various aspects seemed to work or not. Only a few students suggested modifications that would be more suitable for them in their future teaching assignments.

The second essay assignment covered Area II, Classroom Procedures and Routines, including consequence systems for behavior and systems for managing students' work. Most of these essays exhibited at least moderate use of the concepts appearing on the second Guide, but the degree of detail and of interpretation and analysis varied. Most students supplied examples and descriptions of major areas of the classroom procedures noted on Guide II. Most also provided some evaluation of one or more aspects of this system of procedures and routines they observed. A few, observing teachers with weak management systems, rejected their teacher's approach completely without differentiating positive and negative features of the class. Only a minority of the students offered interpretations of <u>why</u> particular procedures were effective or not. Acceptance or rejection of approaches was not for the most part based on <u>explicit</u> assumptions or an analysis

of the effects of this strategy on student engagement or understanding. Rather, the basis for evaluation was most often an implicit one, seemingly whether observers were comfortable with the classroom climate. Most students commented on the nature of student behavior in terms of the degree of compliance with the teacher's expectations or the general appearance of order in the classroom.

Other findings. No written student comments or recommendations about the Guide were available from the Texas site. The instructor indicated he planned to use the Guide again, probably earlier in the semester, perhaps after the students have been in their placement for 2 or 3 weeks. Future plans for Guide use include use of Guide Areas III and IV as part of a more formal observation, with observation notes and a written narrative to be turned in, as a strategy for developing students' clinical skills. The instructor noted that students' written responses to the Guide questions would not be used as an assignment in the course because "such responses tend to be superficial or at least to lack in detail."

Findings From The University of Arizona

Analysis of student products. The only written products available from the 20 Arizona students was a midterm exercise consisting of a "thoughtful and thorough critique of the observation and analysis guides." Students were to describe some of the understandings they acquired, discuss reasons why the Guides were valuable or not, comment on future use or benefit of the Guides as the students assume responsibility for teaching in the future, and make suggestions for additions or refinements to the Guides. With regard to students' use of terms and concepts, substantial variability among the student papers was

noted. This variability no doubt was related to the nature of the assignment, which did not specifically require an analysis of the observed classrooms. A few students provided no elaboration or examples drawn from their observation while others wrote extensively about particular insights obtained from observations. In general, the concepts were used accurately. Because of the nature of the assignment no direct comparison with the Goshen or Texas results for detail or use of terms was appropriate.

Criteria used by the students when they mentioned effectiveness of classroom practices or activities were mainly focused on student engagement or on-/off-task rates. Two students mentioned no basis for judgement. Of the remaining students three described some concern for student learning or performance and appeared to be using this criterion in conjunction with student engagement. Some concern for activity flow/time use was evidenced, but also in conjunction with the criteria of on-/off-task, which seemed to be the predominate focus, in contrast to the papers from Goshen and University of Texas where students seemed to focus more on efficiency and time use than on student engagement.

Variability was also observed in the degree to which students reported changes in their goals or teaching procedures as a result of their observation experiences. Four students noted extensive reconsideration of some aspect of their teaching or noted several new insights that would be incorporated into their classrooms. Three other students described only limited projected changes and the other two students seemed not to have reached a stage of assimilating the concepts. A few students claimed to have acheived greater awareness or

insights, but they were not explicit about changes nor concrete in citing examples from their observations.

Students evaluated the Guide very positively. All of them responded favorably to at least two of the four Observation Guide areas, and most were enthusiastic in their endorsement. Most students gave at least one suggestion for changing the observation manual. Although no discernable patterns were noted in these suggestions, several useful recommendations were made such as the addition of questions or content in the Noteguide relating types of activities or content to variations in student on-task rates and the addition of questions addressing school policies and how they affect classrooms.

The instructor at the Arizona site indicated that the four Noteguides were effective as they were used and that the Observation Guide would be used in future courses at that institution.

Findings from the University of Maryland Site

Students at the Maryland site turned in observation notes and questions and responses to the analysis/descriptive questions. Unfortunately, no student products were available to us at the time of this writing, but the instructor's comments and feedback were instructive. Five secondary and three elementary postbaccalaureate students used the Observation Guide. Some turned in well-developed, detailed products, while two (secondary level) students turned in work with perfunctory responses to questions and sketchy class notes.

Feedback from this site suggests some important additions or changes to the Guide. First, the instructor recommended that analysis/descriptin questions and directions make clear that students are expected to provide and discuss examples backing up their responses

to questions and that their responses integrate information obtained in observations and teacher interviews. The instructor further recommended the addition of analysis questions that require students to go beyond description to interpretation and evaluation, and also a set of preliminary questions requiring students to describe the context for the observation analysis: the grade level, type of class, school and community setting, the number, dates, time, and circumstances of observation. The instructor judged that student products would have been stronger had students had four or more observation opportunities. She said that the observation guide would be used again at the University of Maryland and that she would in the future include class discussions of students' observations experiences and analyses.

Discussion

Although the observation guide, Learning the Classroom Environment, An Observer's Guide to Classroom Management, was used in different task contexts in the four different field test sites, use at all sites was consonant with the main goals of the guide, which were to increase preservice teachers'

- knowledge of classroom management concepts and terms,
- understanding of the demands of the classroom setting and awareness of the details teachers must attend to in their management plans, and
- ability to plan for and make decisions about management in their own classrooms.

In this section we will comment on what we learned about increasing students' abilities in each of these areas and summarize findings and recommendations about the Observation Guide.

Knowledge of Classroom Management Concepts and Terms

One of the widespread concerns about field experience is that students do not learn a common set of concepts that help them interpret and explain classroom events. Based on the field test results from the University of Arizona, Goshen College, University of Texas, and University of Maryland, and comments from the university instructors involved, a reasonable conclusion is that guided observation, analysis and discussion can help address this concern in two ways: First, it can provide students with a cognitive map--a coherent set of terms--to use when perceiving the classroom setting. Students thus can gather examples or instances of behavior according to this set of concepts. Secondly, by asking students to organize observation notes and respond to questions using the terms, the student-observers are engaged in a generative process in which they use the terms to describe observed phenomena.

An important consideration here, however, is that in three of the four sites the Observation Guide was used in conjunction with the Emmer et al. textbooks on classroom management, and at all four sites instructors provided lectures, discussions, and related readings, as recommended in the Forward of the Guide. In no case did it stand alone as the only source of information for students about management in classrooms. The Guide's contribution to student knowledge in this area consists primarily of organizing and focusing observations and providing opportunities for application of concepts and terms in analysis and discussion of the students' own field experience.

Field testing of the Guide raised issues of timing and preparation for observations and analysis. Use of the Guide during the first week

of public school (as in the Goshen program) does not seem to be as profitable as use later in the semester, when classroom teachers have established routines and after preservice students have had opportunity to become well acquainted with the concepts and terms they should use. Although observation of the first days of school is a good experience for beginning teachers, a special set of questions directing students' attention to how the teacher communicates expectations and anticipates students' needs would seem to be more appropriate for this purpose than the guide questions as tested.

A related issue is that it appears that with the exception of guide Area I, The Classroom Setting, more than one observation is desirable before students attempt to respond to the descripton/analysis questions. Having at least four classroom observations and using the area guides in the recommended sequence may provide students with enough cummulative experience to handle the questions for Areas II, III, and IV. In courses that permit only this minimum number of observations, thorough instruction on concepts and observation techniques (as at the Maryland site) prior to observation and analysis is advisable.

Detailed Understanding of Classroom Demands

The Observation Noteguides directed students' attention to a large number of classroom dimensions and details, and the intent of the descriptive/analytical questions was that students would describe and analyze classroom practices in some detail. Feedback from students and instructors indicated that the Observation Guide was extremely useful in helping student-observers notice and focus on many details of the classroom environment that might have remained invisible to them otherwise. At all four field test sites, however, student performance

varied greatly with regard to the amount of detailed description and interpretation. At the three sites where students turned in written responses to the questions, many of the student responses were perfunctory, with few concrete examples and little interpretation. Students' notes of classroom observations also varied as to detail. One of the field site instructors noted a relationship between detailed observation notes and quality of student responses to the questions, and this relationship was also seen in some of the student products we examined.

Several considerations for revision of the Guide and for its use are suggested. If, as was true of the field-tested version of the Observation Guide, questions are limited mostly to description then it can be presumed that students will use the terms descriptively rather than interpretively or analytically. That is, they will mainly use them to identify instances of concepts. If the questions require a more analytic approach, for example, to explain why events occurred, to predict future behavior or to speculate about relationships between behaviors or events, then the nature of the task changes and a more interpretive, explanatory product should result. In addition, questions that <u>specifically</u> require students to cite and discuss examples drawn from their observations require detailed attention and processing by students. In other words, the nature of the Guide questions and the accompanying assignment frames the learning activities that will occur, and future revisions of the Observation Guide should include changes in and addition of more questions requiring students to give examples, explanations, and interpretations of what they observe.

Another consideration is that the degree of accountability for products (Guide questions or other assignments) relating to field experiences is likely to affect students' attention to different aspects of the work. If, as some of our results suggest, detailed, well-organized observation notes or narratives are important in the learning process, requiring students to turn in at least some of their observation notes is probably a good idea. If the Observation Guide is used in a situation in which there is very low accountability, such as when no written products are required and no assessment is made of the adequacy of student understanding of the Guide concepts, low utilization and comprehension might be expected. Having students turn in written products related to their observations on more than one occasion (for instance, turning in observation notes and questions related to Area II, Classroom Procedures and Routines before their assignments for Areas III and/or IV) also allows opportunity for the instructor to give corrective feedback to those individuals who are not treating the observations and questions at an adequate level of detail and interpretation. However, a strong emphasis on accountability might conflict with other goals of the classroom management field experience. For example, grading student products may inhibit exploratory uses of the Guide, and the time required of the instructor to evaluate student products, especially in large enrollment courses, as well as the time required of students to produce the products, could reduce the attention given to other tasks. Thus, in use of the Guide in courses not exclusively concerned with classroom management, the instructor will need to weigh carefully the cost/benefits of particular assignments and related accountability procedures, and set aside adequate time for those which are chosen.

Evaluation and Decision Making

In the original design of the Observer's Guide, questions or observation instruments that encouraged student-observers to judge or evaluate the teacher or class were purposely omitted. We were concerned that students would "rush to judgement" and respond overcritically before having an understanding of the total classroom environment. Thus, questions in the Guide emphasize a descriptive, nonevaluative perspective. It appears inevitable, however, that student-observers will ultimately make evaluative inferences about their observed classrooms. Many students made judgements and evaluations in their written products, even when such were not requested. Further, independent feedback from the four field sites indicated that instructors wish their students to move beyond description and interpretation. In at least three of the sites evaluation and personal decision making were foci of class discussions after observations, and two instructors recommended that questions be added to the Guide to require students' written responses on these issues as well.

Two stages of evaluation/assimilation of field experience would appear to be desirable. The first is identifying explicit goals or rationales for judging or choosing particular practices. Many preservice teachers (and for that matter many teachers and supervisors) have vague, implicit notions about goals or ideals for classroom management. Erdman (198) notes that this situation

> can be attributed to the tacit and nondiscursive aspects of the process of teaching. The highly interactive character of teaching in a classroom setting strengthens the tacit dimension; supervisors of preservice teachers must recognize this dimension and assist preservice teachers in translating tacit knowledge into discursive forms. (p. 30)

Learning tasks accompanying field experiences should help students articulate goals and criteria. Further, one of our intents in developing the Observation Guide was to help students articulate goals that are consonant with the realities of classroom life and that reflect an awareness of the effects of management decisions on student engagement and understanding. We assumed that the observations and the written exercises in the Observation Guide would give students a sound basis for exploring goals and criteria during class discussions or other follow-up activities in courses.

A second stage in assimilation/evalution is the personal adoption of goals and the beginning of decision making about future teaching practices. With the exception of the University of Texas assignment, Observation Guide users did not require their students to consider in writing whether they would or would not adopt observed practices or approaches or the basis for such choices. However, postobservation class discussions in at least three of the sites featured these kinds of questions. Addition of specific questions requiring written student response at such a level in future revisions of the Observation Guide might be helpful for structuring or facilitating class discussions and could require individual students to give thought to such issues before group discussion. In addition, alternate activities might be described and recommended for use with the Guide. For example, one or more integrative essay assignment such as that used in the University of Texas course could encourage students to integrate and analyze observation and interview data and to consider their own plans.

Conclusion

Based on student performance and instructor feedback from four field test sites, a reasonable conclusion is that the activities described in Learning the Classroom Environment: An Observer's Guide to Classroom Management (focused observations, structured notetaking followed by responses to descriptive/analytical questions, postobservation discussions) are an effective means of helping preservice students learn about classroom management in their field experiences. No major difficulties or deficiencies with the Guide were identified. Several areas need additional work or development, however. First, the "Forward to Instructor" will be revised and extended to include a discussion guide, suggestions for giving students training in observation techniques (e.g., narrative writing) before use of the field guide particularly in Areas III and IV, and some suggestions about checking and giving students feedback on their observation notes and answers to questions or other tasks. Second, additional questions at the interpretive and evaluative level will be added for written student response. Third, we will add some questions or other tasks that require or encourage students' personal reflection and decision making in the area of classroom management. These additions and changes can be made without altering the basic structure or focus of the four guides.

Development and experimentation efforts such as this are needed to identify effective instructional approaches for increasing the learning of preservice teachers in field experiences. Because field experiences occur in such a variety of course structures and school contexts, field testing of structured activities in different teacher education programs is essential. The variety of approaches used with this Guide by

instructors at the four field sites shows that materials addressing central teaching functions such as classroom management need to be adaptable. That the Guide was used successfully in four different sites, in different courses, and with students at various levels of their teacher preparation programs, attests to its robustness and potential.

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